DICASTERY FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Hindus and Christians: forging pathways of peace together in "the spirit of Assisi"

MESSAGE FOR THE FEAST OF DEEPAVALI
2026

Vatican City

Dear friends,

The Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue extends its warmest prayerful and festive wishes to you as you celebrate Deepavali on 8 November this year. May God, the fount of all that is good, bless you, your families, loved ones and communities with abundant joy, peace and prosperity!

Forty years ago, on 27 October 1986, representatives of the world's religions gathered in Assisi, at the invitation of Saint John Paul II, to pray for peace. Assisi, the birthplace and resting place of Saint Francis of Assisi, who was hailed as "a man of peace" (cf. Pope John Paul II, *Address to the Representatives of the Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of the World Religions*, 27 October 1986), thus became the setting for a historic encounter, in which people of various religions came together to pray, convinced that religions and interreligious solidarity can help address global crises and promote peace. Saint John Paul II called this the "spirit of Assisi", which over the years has inspired countless initiatives for peace throughout the world (cf. *Address to the Leaders of the World Religions*, 26 October 1986).

In the face of the many challenges facing humanity today, especially those arising from wars, conflicts, and the use of religion for political ends, the commemoration of the 1986 Assisi gathering offers us the opportunity to reflect with you on how Hindus and Christians can forge pathways of peace together, drawing inspiration from the spirit of Assisi.

One such pathway is to come together to pray with a shared spiritual commitment to peace, each according to his or her own religious tradition, while respecting that of the other. Indeed, genuine prayer overcomes differences and disarms hearts, minds and lives (cf. Pope Leo XIV, *Message for the 59th World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2026), transforming us into men and women of compassion and peace.

Another pathway is to nurture the spirit of universal fraternity exemplified by Saint Francis, who treated all as omnes fratres, "brothers and sisters all" (cf. Pope Francis, *Message for the 47th World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2014). Fraternity enables us to recognize the face of God in others and to stand in solidarity with them, especially the poor and the weak. The more fraternity flourishes among us, the more peace will take root in our world.

Above all, interreligious dialogue lies at the heart of the spirit of Assisi, because of its profound potential to advance the cause of global peace. Today, such dialogue is a "vital necessity" (cf. Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the Ambassadors of Countries with a Muslim Majority and to the Representatives of Muslim Communities in Italy*, 25 September 2006). As Pope Leo XIV reminds us, it plays "a decisive role, because at the heart of the great spiritual paths lies a message of peace" (Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas*, 223).

The spirit of Assisi is at its core a commitment to peace. The Assisi gathering united people of diverse religious traditions and showed the world that authentic religions of their

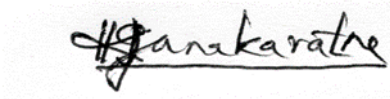
very nature promote peace and reject every form of violence, since violence "is the antithesis of religion and contributes to its destruction" (cf. Pope Benedict XVI, *Address at the Day of Reflection, Dialogue, and Prayer for Peace and Justice in the World*, 27 October 2011).

As persons grounded in our respective religions, and as people with shared values, may we, Hindus and Christians, draw renewed inspiration from the fortieth anniversary of the Assisi gathering. May we imbibe ever more the spirit of Assisi in our own lives by praying for peace, living the spirit of fraternity in our daily lives, and, by engaging actively in interreligious dialogue, joining hands with people of other religions and all people of goodwill in working for peace in our world.

We wish you all a Happy Deepavali!



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